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From: Info-Hams Mailing List and Newsgroup <info-hams@ucsd.edu>  
Errors-To: Info-Hams-Errors@UCSD.Edu  
Reply-To: Info-Hams@UCSD.Edu  
Precedence: Bulk  
Subject: Info-Hams Digest V93 #1098  
To: Info-Hams

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Today's Topics:

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We trust that readers are intelligent enough to realize that all text  
herein consists of personal comments and does not represent the official  
policies or positions of any party. Your mileage may vary. So there.  
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Date: Wed, 15 Sep 1993 15:13:31 GMT  
From: netcomsv!netcom.com!steve@decwrl.dec.com  
To: info-hams@ucsd.edu

References <04=z0yg@dixie.com>, <!cbztqc@dixie.com>,  
<1993Sep14.160544.29507@ke4zv.atl.ga.us>  
Subject : Re: Emergency: cellular vs ham (was Re: Yagi for Cellular Phone?)

In article <1993Sep14.160544.29507@ke4zv.atl.ga.us>, gary@ke4zv.atl.ga.us (Gary Coffman) writes:

> John tends to paint with a broad brush, but his comments are mostly  
> on the mark for this area, and as far as I can tell for East Tenn  
> as well. We once had a marvelous system in Ky during the 50s and  
> 60s, at least up to 68, but my visits up there seem to indicate that  
> it too has decayed, mostly for the same officious reasons given by John.  
> Most agencies want and need help sometimes, but they want and need it  
> on their terms, using their methods and their procedures. This is only  
> reasonable on their part. Too many times the people who gravitate to ARES  
> want to give of their services only if they can shape the systems and  
> procedures to \*their\* vision. And the two are rarely coincident.

Granted, I don't claim to be an expert on the situation in your area  
and I just wish John would quit claiming to be an expert in mine ;-)

>There are two issues here. First I'd opine that the growth of advanced  
>consumer communications technology has narrowed rather than widened the  
>gap between consumer communications capabilities and amateur capabilities.  
>Amateur practice really hasn't changed much from the early 60s, aside  
>from packet. Meanwhile the growth of cellular, FAX, and computer comm  
> among the general public has skyrocketed. I'd note that when the San Francisco  
> earthquake hit, many of us turned to the computer networks for word rather  
> than dialing in HF as we would have done in earlier times.

Not me... I listened to AM broadcast... but then I was sitting in the  
middle of it ;-)

This is quite true - no argument in general.

> The second point is related to the first in a way. While consumer  
> technology has advanced rapidly, amateurs have by and large tended  
> to cling to outmoded techniques, and to increasingly rely on the  
> same consumer companies to supply their black boxes. Because the  
> amateur community has resisted change, both informally, and formally  
> through their input into the licensing regulations, those black boxes  
> have increasingly fallen behind the state of the art in communications  
> technique. Communications has increasingly become a cooperative  
> venture. From cellular systems to in-car terminals, the emphasis  
> has turned strongly toward actively cooperative networks of systems.  
> Yet amateurs continue to operate under a paradigm of competition  
> rather than cooperation. This shows in our inability to establish  
> stable communications networks at the local, state, or national  
> level. Our interoperability with agency systems is still very  
> firmly in the manual yellow pad stage. That puts us more and  
> more into the irrelevant category.

This is only partially true. Where it is easy to find splinter  
repeater groups (or PRIVATE machines) in every area it also possible  
to find cooperative efforts. Two local efforts come to mind to  
prove the point. In my local area we tend to have ARES support  
organizations that organize to provide an infrastructure that ARES  
uses to accomplish their mission. There isn't one of these but  
several accross the different areas of the bay. I'm going to  
pick on one in particular that I'm most familiar with. The SVECS  
group supports a repeater that is the primary county organizing channel  
during an emergency. We use it for what is called a resource  
net employed in advertising the situation and lining up volunteers  
and equipment for the event we are trying to staff. OK, that is  
how the system is employed, now let me speak a bit about SVECS. This  
is a group of people that contribute money, get together 4 times a year  
at a breakfast and support a technical committee that takes care  
of the repeater...so far nothing unusual about that. Let's take it

a bit farther. The members of SVECS consist of folks from multiple ARES jurisdictions? We are organized along city boundaries here so there is an EC for each city and a corresponding ARES group for the city. So here is a group of folks that have gotten together socially and financially but are supplying a support system yet they go beyond their local turf situation. The other interesting thing about SVECS is that it is run in sort of a benign dictatorship mode. The existing board of directors has sat there for a lot of years with no real move to change em, or anyone wanting too. Lastly, when any ARES group wants to use the machine...they do...no asking...no clearing it with the power brokers of the repeater...they just use it. That is what makes it such a joy to be a member of the group, essentially no politics!

The other example that comes to mind are the various long-hall linking systems in place in CA. We have at least 3 systems I can think of that provide VHF/UHF linking up and down CA. (That is like linking Philly with Miami!) There are numerous repeater groups who have gotten together to make this happen. So there are successful cooperative groups in amateur radio. There is hope!

> It's true that many amateurs have mastered the art of soldering  
> a connector, and some even know which end of a beam is the front,  
> but how many can quickly set up an ad hoc interface between an  
> agency communications system and an amateur system? How many  
> can quickly and accurately solve a network problem for an agency?  
> How many can even quickly adapt to an agency's operating protocols?  
> How many can discard their normal amateur competitive training and  
> adopt a cooperative approach? As agency support personnel, our  
> job is to fit seamlessly and transparently our communications  
> assets into the agency's systems. How many even know what their  
> local agency's systems are? How many even know what it means to  
> operate over a trunked communications system?

Boy you walked into this time ;-) I can easily say just about ANY member of my local group and a fair percentage of the local amateurs can do any of the above at the expert level...whoops... but then I live in Silicon Valley ;-)

Let me propose an alternative question... within most groups is there a reservoir of such talent? Can someone in your area that you can call handle an ethernet question, or knows how to use a computer beyond just an elementary level? That is a serious question to think about. I can take the answer to the above for granted...but someone located in the middle of Nebraska farm country probably can't.

> For most amateurs, the roles that they can fill \*as amateurs\*

> in the emergency communications assistance role grow smaller  
> every year. To most agencies, we are just warm bodies who must  
> be taught to \*unlearn\* our amateur habits before we are useful  
> to the agency.

Well, we are warm bodies...and I can think of one active use of amateurs locally where we have to form a corp much like John has described in the past for said agency....that being the California Dept of Forrestry..when we go out and help during fire suppression efforts... but even then, while operating under the Incident Command System(that employed in Tenn, Ky?) we tend to operate our circuits in our own manner without any loss of efficiency.

> If we're serious about filling an emergency communications role,  
> we need to look carefully at the way we operate day to day as  
> amateurs and see how that relates to what a trained emergency  
> responder needs to be doing. We should be concentrating our  
> activities on developing cooperative communications systems  
> within the amateur ranks. We should be working to eliminate  
> as many practices based on competition and emphasis on differences  
> as possible. In short, we should concentrate on teamwork rather  
> than constantly battling to see who can collect the most postal  
> cards, give our callsigns the most frequently in a 3 minute  
> period, build empires to our egos, or other inane practices. We  
> need to be forward thinking, quick to adopt new technologies and  
> exploit them to their fullest. We need to be equally ruthless in  
> discarding obsolescent techniques and equipment or we will fall  
> increasingly behind agency practices and needs. That sounds more  
> like a description of the average computer geek than it does of  
> the stereotypical amateur radio operator doesn't it? I suspect  
> there's a lesson there.  
>  
> Gary

Gary, I wouldn't argue the above. It seems that this mostly comes down to politics and dealing with various peoples personal ambitions in a structured way. The raw tallent is probably hiding in there...you gotta go fish it out and organize it usefully and cooperatively.

Any suggestions?

Steve KA6S

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End of Info-Hams Digest V93 #1098

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